



**For Immediate Release**  
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**New Online Tool Bridges Technology Use Gap for Women and Minority Small-Business Owners**

*Government and private enterprise join forces to provide technology resources to make small businesses more competitive*

**Arlington, Va.,** — The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) and the Technology Partnership for Small Business Task Force co-founders —Microsoft Corp., Cisco Systems, Inc., and AT&T — under the guidance of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), today launched a new online tool, *Biz Tech-Connect*.

*Biz Tech-Connect* ([www.biztechconnect.com](http://www.biztechconnect.com)) is a small-business Web portal that provides free online technology training geared towards women and minority entrepreneurs nationwide. Content, features and links on *Biz Tech-Connect* provide users with up-to-the-minute business news through Small Business TV (provided by AT&T), free instructional Web-based seminars, video training courses hosted by business experts, and information on managing and growing a small business. Business owners can also submit questions to and receive answers from member companies.

The recommendation for *Biz Tech-Connect* traces its origin to the Women's Business Enterprise National Council Technology Toolbox pilot and workshop that was funded by the AT&T Foundation, the philanthropic arm of AT&T, in 2004. This project gave women entrepreneurs easy access to the latest information about how technology can contribute to the success of their businesses.

"There is a significant body of knowledge from the private and public sector that shows an underutilization of technology by small, minority- and women-owned businesses. The Minority Business Development Agency commends ITAA, Microsoft, WBENC, AT&T and the Task Force for their commitment to tackle this opportunity gap," said Ronald Langston, MBDA national director. "Ensuring that women and minority entrepreneurs realize their business success and competitiveness through the effective use of technology is essential to America's economic strength."

Microsoft convened the Task Force, now administered by ITAA, in response to an Urban Institute study that revealed that many women and minority business owners were not maximizing their earning potential by better utilizing technology. The study also

projected that the U.S. economy could capture up to \$200 billion in additional revenue if technology use increased among minority- and women-owned enterprises.

“Too often, minority- and women-owned businesses have not realized the benefits of the technology boom,” said ITAA Vice President for Government Relations, Cindy Jimenez. “ITAA is proud to work with both the public and private sectors to provide women and minority small businesses with market access to technology information and resources so they can stay competitive in today’s global economy. We encourage companies across the IT industry to contribute information to aid small businesses’ access to technology through Biz Tech Connect.”

“Small businesses overall, including those that are women- and minority-owned, are growing, thanks in large part to increased access to the Internet,” said John Regan, vice president of Small Business Segment Marketing, AT&T. “AT&T is proud to have played a key role in developing *Biz Tech-Connect*, which helps entrepreneurs better understand and leverage technologies, such as e-mail, Web sites and high-speed Internet access to expand their business.”

“Among the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council’s membership of over 6,500 certified, women-owned businesses, we find technology users at every level. In addition to certification services and accessibility to supply chain opportunities, WBENC aims to aide our women’s business enterprises (WBEs) in increasing their effectiveness and efficiency through technology,” said Linda Denny, interim president of WBENC. “AT&T and Microsoft have been among WBENC’s corporate supporters for many years, and have joined with the MBDA in this Task Force, to ensure that these technology tools get in the hands of our powerful WBEs.”

“Microsoft is committed to working with both public leaders such as MBDA and technology counterparts to provide technology and tools to help minority- and women-owned small businesses realize their full potential,” said Reed Overfelt, General Manager of Mid-Atlantic Small and Medium Business Division, Microsoft Corp.

Additional information about the Task Force and the Biz Tech-Connect seminars is available at <http://www.biztechconnect.com>.

### **About the Task Force**

The Technology Partnership for Small Business Task Force is a first-ever collaboration of an elite group of IT industry leaders, associations representing small, minority and women-owned businesses, and other partners. convened by Microsoft Corp., Cisco, and AT&T to address the underutilization of technology by minority- and women-owned businesses. ITAA is the managing host of the Task Force.

### **About ITAA**

The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) provides global public policy, business networking, and national leadership to promote the continued rapid growth of the IT industry. ITAA consists of over 325 corporate members throughout the

U.S. The Association plays the leading role in issues of IT industry concern including information security, taxes and finance policy, digital intellectual property protection, telecommunications competition, workforce and education, immigration, online privacy and consumer protection, government IT procurement, human resources and e-commerce policy. ITAA members range from the smallest IT start-ups to industry leaders in the Internet, software, IT services, digital content, systems integration, telecommunications, and enterprise solution fields. For more information, visit [www.ita.org](http://www.ita.org). ITAA is secretariat of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance, consisting of 70 IT trade associations around the world.

**About the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC):**

Founded in 1997, WBENC is the nation's leading third-party certifier of businesses owned and operated by women, and the leading advocate of women's business enterprises (WBEs) as suppliers to corporate America. The average WBENC certified company has revenues of \$7.7M, 45 employees and 14 years of experience. Approximately 50 WBE firms have revenues in excess of \$100M, and six certified WBE companies have revenues in excess of \$1 billion. 238 U.S. corporations are active members of WBENC and representatives of 36 corporations sit on the WBENC Board of Directors, along with nine representatives of its partner organizations and nine WBEs. WBENC certification is accepted by more than 700 corporations, representing America's most prestigious brands, as well as government entities at the state, local and Federal levels. WBENC also has developed several highly regarded initiatives for recognizing excellence in corporate supplier diversity targeting WBEs (America's Top Corporations for Women's Business Enterprises, The WBENC Applause Awards) and women's business enterprises (WBENC's Woman-Owned Business Stars). [WEBuy@wbenc.org](mailto:WEBuy@wbenc.org) is an online marketplace where corporations and government agencies, as well as WBEs, post RFPs, sources sought, and RFIs. WBENC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks and accepts donations from corporations, foundations and individuals that support its mission and programs. [WBENCLink](#) is an Internet database, accessed by WBENC corporate members and certified women's business enterprises (WBEs), which contains information on certified women's businesses for purchasing managers nationwide.

**About the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce:**

Established in 1971 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in the United States. The Agency actively promotes the strategic growth and competitiveness of minority business enterprises by offering management and technical assistance, and facilitating access to contracting and financing opportunities through a network of over forty minority business centers throughout the United States.

**About AT&T**

AT&T Inc. is a premier communications holding company. Its subsidiaries and affiliates, AT&T operating companies, are the providers of AT&T services in the United States and around the world. Among their offerings are the world's most advanced IP-based business

communications services and the nation's leading wireless, high speed Internet access and voice services. In domestic markets, AT&T is known for the directory publishing and advertising sales leadership of its Yellow Pages and YELLOWPAGES.COM organizations, and the AT&T brand is licensed to innovators in such fields as communications equipment. As part of its three-screen integration strategy, AT&T is expanding its TV entertainment offerings. Additional information about AT&T Inc. and the products and services provided by AT&T subsidiaries and affiliates is available at <http://www.att.com>.

**About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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